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Dear Parent/Carer

### **Attendance Letter**

I hope this letter finds you well and that you all had enjoyable and restful summers.

At the start of the new academic year, I wanted to write to you to share the measures we will be putting in place to encourage your sons and daughters to maintain excellent attendance at BFS. The link between high attendance and strong academic progress is clear, with students who have attendance of 95% or more achieving at least one grade higher in their GCSEs than students with attendance below this figure. Although an attendance figure of 90% may seem high, this represents 18 days of school missed in one academic year and can have a profound impact on learning. To support your son or daughter with their attendance we will:

- Encourage all students to meet or exceed the school's target of **96%**. This target is displayed in every tutor room.
- Ensure tutors rigorously monitor attendance each week and share this with their tutees.
- Recognise and reward pupils who consistently maintain excellent attendance or make improvements.
- Work with families and put positive support plans in place for students who are falling below the school's target.
- Make contact with parents and carers if your child's attendance becomes a concern.
- Refer students to the Educational Welfare Officer so they can receive specialist attendance support and advice.

### **Attendance**

We take attendance very seriously at BFS. We know that the best way for students to learn is to be in school every day. We also know that school is an important place for the wider development of the student through extra-curricular activities and socialising with friends.

You can check your child's attendance on the MCAS app. Remember that to be good, an attendance record should be above **96%** (fewer than 7 days off a year).

Please find our Attendance Policy attached. It can also be viewed through this link: [POLICY - Attendance BFS.pdf](#)

### **Responding to illness**

We always encourage students to attend, regardless of minor illness and we will always send a student home who is not well enough to be in school. It is often the case that once a student has got in and settled in lessons, they are able to learn well and make it through the full school day.

If your child is ill, please follow the NHS guidance on whether your child is well enough to attend school by following this link: [Is my child too ill for school? - NHS](#)

If your child is simply too unwell to attend school then please notify us by 8.30am, either by leaving a message on the school absence line 01179597200 (option 1) or by using Studybugs. Please do not email your child's Tutor or Head of Year to report an absence.



One of the main benefits of Studybugs is that it will automatically update the electronic register so that we will know almost immediately if you have contacted us to let us know that your child is away with an illness or a medical appointment. This is a much quicker, easier and more efficient way for you to notify the school of absences. Register online via the Studybugs website: <https://studybugs.com/about/parents> or download the free Studybugs App. Then all you have to do is send us a free text when your child is away.

### **Medical Appointments**

Where possible, please make medical and/or dental appointments outside of school time and during holidays. We do understand that these appointments can be hard to come by and sometimes it is unavoidable that they are scheduled during school time, particularly in the case of hospital appointments. In these instances, students should, wherever possible, come into school before and after their appointment in order to maximise their learning time in school.

Please email evidence of the appointment, together with collection and return times to [admin@bristlfreeschool.org.uk](mailto:admin@bristlfreeschool.org.uk). It is the responsibility of the student to go to Main Reception at the time of the appointment. Students will be released at the carpark gate when their parent/carer buzzes main reception.

### **DfE Guidance on Lateness**

The vast majority of students at BFS have excellent punctuality and arrive well before 8.30am each morning. Any student who arrives after 8.30am (without good reason) will be marked late on the register and will receive a detention. Lateness is tracked by the Attendance Officer, Form Tutors and Heads of Year.

The Department for Education guidance states that registers in schools may only remain open for 30 minutes in the morning and afternoon, after which any lateness will result in **an unauthorised absence or 'U' code** (unless we have been notified in advance that your child is arriving late due to an evidenced medical appointment, in which case an authorised medical absence will be recorded).

At BFS the morning register will be open from **8.30am-9.00am** and the afternoon register from **1.20pm-1.50pm**. It is therefore essential that your child arrives on time and receives an attendance mark before the closure of registers.

### **Term Time Absence and Holiday Requests**

Our policy states that absence during term time will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances. **No holidays in term time will be authorised.** To support and improve attendance, BFS will follow guidance in Bristol City Council's Code of Conduct and issue fixed penalty notices (FPNs). Currently fines are issued for 10 unauthorised absences (each day being 2 absences) in a ten-week period, but may also be issued to parents/carers that repeatedly take unauthorised absences under this threshold.

#### **Fines per parent/carer per child are currently:**

First penalty notice in a rolling three-year period: £80 (rising to £160 if paid between 22 and 28 days).

Second penalty notice in a rolling three-year period: £160.

Third offences in a rolling three-year period will be referred to the Education Welfare team at Bristol City Council for prosecution which may result in fines of up to £2500 per parent per child or three months imprisonment.

Prosecution may also be used instead of issuing fines if appropriate.

If you are worried about your child's attendance, please call the Attendance Office on 01179597200.

**Unavoidable absence**

For unavoidable absence, such as a funeral or elite sport, please contact [admin@bristolfreeschool.org.uk](mailto:admin@bristolfreeschool.org.uk) for an absence request form, ideally two weeks before the planned absence.

Yours sincerely



Mr M MacBlain  
Assistant Headteacher - Attendance Lead